February 13, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR FILE - CO-2-34030

At 2:30 p.m., February 12, 1969, at the request of Mr. Harry R. Van Cleve, Jr., General Counsel, General Services Administration, the following persons met in the Director's Conference Room at 1800 G Street, N.W.: Assistant Director Kelley, Assistant Director Peterson, Legal Counsel Robert Goff, Special Agent in Charge John E. Parker, Harry Van Cleve, GSA, James B. Rhoads, Archivist of the United States, Dudley Chapman, Office of the Legal Counsel, Department of Justice, and Byron E. Harding, Associate General Counsel, GSA.

Mr. Van Cleve outlined the problem he wished to discuss, stating that some weeks ago, at the request of the Attorney General of the United States, a panel of physicians reviewed the autopsy slides made by the physicians at the Naval Hospital relative to the assassination of the late President Kennedy. In their report, which was made a matter of public record, they mentioned that the material they examined was furnished to them by the Archivist of the United States, and was included on an inventory list which accompanied the letter from Dr. George C. Burkley to Mrs. Lincoln, dated April 26, 1965. Mr. Van Cleve stated that this was a gratuitous statement made by the doctors and it would have been so much better if they had merely indicated what material they had examined.

Mr. Van Cleve then went on to explain that at some unspecified date there was placed in a bin at the Archives a quantity of material in sealed cardboard boxes and a locked foot locker. This material was received from the Kennedy offices, presumably from Mrs. Lincoln.

Subsequently, in October, 1966, the family of the late President Kennedy made a gift to the United States of certain specified articles which were further described in the letter to Lawson B. Knott, Jr., Administrator of General Services, from Burke Marshall on behalf of the Executor of the Estate of John F. Kennedy, dated October 29, 1966. The articles to be given to the Archivist were in the sealed boxes and the foot locker mentioned above, and when the Archivist took possession of and opened these containers a careful inventory of the contents was made. A key to the foot locker was produced by Angela M. Novello, Secretary to Senator Robert F. Kennedy. When the foot locker was opened, it was found to contain articles No. 1 through 8 listed on the inventory prepared by Dr. Burkley on April 26, 1965.

A careful search was made in the Archives to ascertain what happened to the articles described in Item No. 9 of Dr. Burkley's inventory and they cannot be found in the Archives.

Mr. Van Cleve is concerned that writers like Weisberg or Mark Lane, when they learned that such an inventory existed, would demand to see the inventory and items covered by it. He indicated that he saw no legal reason how the existence of this inventory could be kept from writers of this kind, and that when they learned of the inventory and then learned that some of the items on the inventory were not in the possession of the Archives, that this would lead to all sorts of speculation and accusation that the government was not being perfectly frank and open in handling this matter, and that it was further proof of the various conspiracies which these writers are alleging surround the assassination of President Kennedy. It is our opinion also that this is a distinct possibility.

There was a discussion concerning the reference in the inventory of the complete autopsy protocol of President Kennedy (original and 7 cc's) and the fact that we forwarded to the Archivist the original autopsy protocol on October 3, 1967 (Commission Exhibit No. 387). This could raise the question about two original autopsy protocols. We, of course, were unable to resolve this discrepancy since we do not have access to the paper referred to in Dr. Burkley's inventory. We can speculate that what was described as the original autopsy protocol in the inventory might have been another ribbon copy of the original protocol or that it was merely mislabeled, but it does give an opportunity for writers to discuss the discrepancy.

I suggested that a source of information concerning the missing material would be Mrs. Lincoln since our file was well documented and that all of this material was turned over to Dr. Burkley and receipts obtained, and Dr. Burkley turned all of the material over to Mrs. Lincoln and obtained a receipt. Mr. Rhoads appeared to be reluctant to contact Mrs. Lincoln and we got the impression that they had had some difficulties with Mrs. Lincoln in the past.

I then suggested that Mr. Van Cleve talk to Dr. Burkley. I indicated that it would be surprising to me if the Kennedy family made any disposition of the material in question without consulting Dr. Burkley. Mr. Van Cleve agreed that Dr. Burkley should be contacted but asked me to contact him since neither he nor Dr. Rhoads knew Dr. Burkley and Dr. Burkley did not know them. He was concerned that Dr. Burkley might be reluctant to discuss this matter with someone whom he did not know. I agreed to contact Dr. Burkley.

At 9:00 a.m., February 13, I talked to Dr. Burkley at his home at 3507 Preston Court, Chevy Chase, Maryland. Dr. Burkley advised me that after turning all of this material over to Mrs. Lincoln he

never saw nor heard anything about its disposition, and that he was surprised to hear that it was not with the remainder of the material he turned over to Mrs. Lincoln. After discussing the problem, Dr. Burkley offered to call Mrs. Lincoln. He did this in my presence and Mrs. Lincoln told him that all of the material he turned over to her was placed in a trunk or foot locker; that it was locked, and that to her knowledge it was never opened nor the contents disturbed by her. She said, however, that sometime after its receipt all of the material concerning the assassination, with which she was working, was turned over to Angie Novello, Robert Kennedy's Secretary. (Angela Novello is said to be a secretary to Mr. Angier Biddle Duke, Ambassador to Denmark).

Dr. Burkley said that Henry Giordano, former White House driver who is known to us, was also an employee of the Kennedy family at that time and was working with Mrs. Lincoln. Giordano is now a Doorkeeper at the U. S. Senate. He is under Senator Pastore's patronage, but actually works for Senator Kennedy's office. It is my opinion that Giordano should not be talked to concerning this matter.

On February 13, I called Harry Van Cleve and advised him of the results of the conversation with Dr. Burkley, and further advised him that, in my opinion, we should not contact Giordano. He agreed with this and stated he felt that the inquiry would have to remain as it now stands; that perhaps we were borrowing trouble in exploring it any further, and assured me that the Archivist had made a thorough search of all of the material on hand to make sure that the material in question had not been received by the Archivist at another time or under other circumstances.

Thomas J. Kelley
Assistant Director (PI)

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